



# Montgomery County Council

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**For Immediate Release**

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*Passage likely with Council majority, County Exec on board...*

## **ANDREWS INTRODUCES "LIVING WAGE" MEASURE TO HELP COUNTY'S WORKING POOR**

Flanked by community and political leaders, Councilmember Phil Andrews joined other Councilmembers today in unveiling legislation that would help the County's working poor by requiring for-profit companies with county contracts to pay their workers at least \$10.50 an hour.

The new legislation, sponsored by a majority of the Council and supported by the County Executive, will be introduced in the Council tomorrow. Almost three years ago, a similar measure was narrowly defeated by the Council, which instead approved a county "earned income tax credit" and other assistance. Once approved, this living wage would go into effect on July 1, 2003.

"People who work hard for a living ought to earn a living wage," said Councilmember Andrews. "This legislation will give a boost several thousand Montgomery families. And it will help businesses by reducing employee turnover and increasing productivity. I'm proud that Montgomery County will soon join the almost 80 local jurisdictions around the country where living wage laws are already making a difference."

Andrews said the measure could affect 447 contracts totaling \$388 million worth of business with Montgomery County government.

"These are the people who clean the windows, cut the grass, and collect our garbage," said Council President Steve Silverman, who was instrumental in winning support for the initiative. "They work hard and play by the rules. They deserve a living wage."

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The legislation would cover for-profit county contractors with more than ten employees and \$50,000 in county contracts. It would not cover non-profit organizations, contracts for public utility services, and emergency contracts.

Contractors who offer health insurance would receive credit against the \$10.50 wage level. Also, non-profit contractors who pay a living wage would not be penalized for those higher costs in bidding on county contracts.

Also sponsoring the measure are Councilmembers Derick Berlage, Blair Ewing, and Isiah Leggett.

Andrews, Silverman, and Berlage were joined at their news conference by community and political leaders. All credited the persistent grassroots community campaign for the bill as important to today's event.

"I'm proud that the County Council has taken leadership on this issue," said Elbridge James of the Montgomery County NAACP, which is joining with other organizations to support living wage legislation on the state level.

"For us, the living wage works hand-in-hand with the American dream," said Luisa Salseda of the Hispanic Democratic Club. "We are working two or three jobs. This gives a better chance for our kids to succeed in school."

That theme was echoed by Mark Simon, president of the Montgomery County Education Association.

"When parents hold two or three jobs to make ends meet and students themselves have to work to support their families, then students can't do a good job in school," he offered.

"We work with janitors who have to take their children to work with them because they can't afford child care," said Kim Lamberti, representing the Catholic Archdiocese of Washington. "We must stand up for workers' dignity."

A public hearing on the bill will be held at 7:30 PM on March 26 at the County Council Building.

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